

Committee Secretary

Senate Standing Committees on Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

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Parliament House

Canberra ACT 2600

Australia

Submission to the Inquiry into the Fair Work Amendment (Small Business-Penalty Rates Exemption) Bill 2012

I am a permanent employee, working as a Safety Practitioner, currently earning around \$70,000 per year.

I formerly was a Storeman at a Distribution centre (with a major grocery retailer) earning \$22 per hour. I had a family and a mortgage. I was paying over 50% of my ordinary rate take-home wage to meet my mortgage. I did not work Sundays but seasonally worked Saturdays - I received penalty rates for my overtime work Monday to Friday and my work on Saturdays. I was away from my family and friends on the Saturdays I worked. I once developed medically diagnosed fatigue from working over 60 hours of physical storeperson picking and packing work and having to maintain a pick rate (Season of 2003).

If penalty rates were abolished - as the management threatened they would do under

John Howard WorkChoices powers - I would have been forced by my management (they told us all this) to work Sunday and Saturday for no extra pay. It is likely that management would have expected me to work 7 days a week during the peak season / other sales peaks. I was also told that they would move my 'ordinary hours' from Monday to Friday to Wednesday to Sunday - hence even in quiet times I would still have to work Saturdays and Sundays for no extra pay at all. I would not have got to see my family or friends during the day - at all , and would be too tired to do family and friend socialising activities at night after 12 hour days.

My weekends are important to me because I value family time - as we all should. Where I was to work 12 hour days on Saturday - after working the same Monday to Friday - I did not have the energy for family time / socialising with friends on Sunday, in fact I would need to sleep til 12 midday to recuperate.

Also, whilst I am not a regular church-goer, where I was actually forced to accept a Wednesday to Sunday 'ordinary hours' employment contract I would not have been able to attend Church at all.

I urge the committee to keep penalty rates as the removal of weekend penalty rates in the hospitality sector will erode the presence of penalty rates in other sectors such as grocery and retail warehouseing - resulting in workers having to work more / all Saturday and Sundays - and with no recompense for this. Removal of weekend penalty rates IS WorkChoices by stealth. Senator Xenathon is an ex lawyer who has no respect for folk who have to work physically hard and have little control over the hours they work. It is NOT just the case that e.g. Uni students are seeking work on the weekend and would be happy to receive the normal ordinary hours day rate (and would all work in some worker friendly 'funky' bar or cafe) - The removal of weekend penalty rates is one part on a business assault on all penalty rates across all sectors.

Through my hard work and determination, the extra money I earned via me working 60+ hour weeks - and thus getting paid penalty rates - enabled me to save up enough to engage in studies and eventually become a Safety Practitioner. Cutting penalty rates will also severely limit workers opportunities to 'get ahead' either financially or via education. I certainly could not have studied my degree without having saved up enough penalty rate wages to leave the warehouse and study.

I note that the WA Chamber of Commerce and Industry is not open on Sunday, nor I wager that its CEO or staff have Saturday and Sunday as 'ordinary hours'. They certainly are not putting their money where their mouth is on this issue in supporting the - few - business owners / managers who do work Saturday or Saturday and Sundays.

Submitted by

Bruce Campbell

Monday 17th of September 2012